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# A Review of Shared Vision and its Application within an Army Context

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## ABSTRACT

This report provides a review of relevant literature that addresses the concept of shared vision. In doing so, it explores some of the ways in which shared vision is defined and highlights the main theories associated with the concept. Considerations are also given to those factors which enable or inhibit a truly shared vision, and the benefits it can provide for organisations.

This report then looks at the theory of shared vision in the context of the U.S Army, and Australian Army Doctrine: exploring and identifying challenges and opportunities, to a shared vision's successful implementation. Implications are also proposed for the execution of shared vision within the Australian Army.

Finally, the limitations of this paper and the gaps in research on shared vision are addressed. This review of literature will be used to inform the discussion of the Army Learning Organisation (ALO) research results.

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# **A Review of Shared Vision and its Application within an Army Context**

## **Executive Summary**

This review of shared vision literature will help to inform the Army Learning Organisation (ALO) case study research and contribute to the interpretation of quantitative results. This research is intended to assist Army in its development as a learning organisation.

To achieve this, a broad examination of academic literature and Australian Army doctrine is presented, to delve into the issues surrounding the concept of shared vision and to situate these in an Army context.

When looking to create and implement a shared vision the literature points to many areas in need of consideration. The vision itself needs to be clear and something that speaks to all employees' interests. To achieve this, organisations need supportive leaders who can assist personnel to develop themselves, their vision and their connection to the organisation. Leaders also need to be able to effectively communicate and translate the vision in order to see it shared. It takes effort to develop and maintain a shared vision but it can provide an organisation with empowered employees who are confident in the decisions they make or the goals they set. The main barriers that exist to developing a truly shared vision are the organisation's existing culture and structure.

This report goes on to explore what implications these factors may present the Australian Army in their efforts to develop and sustain a shared vision. What do the findings from the literature mean for the Australian Army, and how might they address the problems that can emerge? This review also examines the gaps and limitations of current shared vision research with some suggestions for the future.

This report highlights that the Australian Army in spite of the limitations that its established structure and culture presents, can achieve collective understanding among its personnel with respect to the organisation's goals and future aspirations - in short, generating and sustaining a shared organisational vision.

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## 1. Background

The Australian Army (2009b) has highlighted a need and desire to become a learning organisation in order to meet their adaptive aspirations, initiatives and requirements now, and into the future. The hope is that by adopting the tenets of a learning organisation, Army will be better placed to tackle the complexities inherent in their role both locally and globally. As de Somer and Schmidtchen (1999) observe “[t]he Army recognises that organisations that excel in the future will be those that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels” (p. 1).

In order to assist the Australian Army with this endeavour an Army Learning Organisation (ALO) research program has been developed that will allow Army to monitor its efforts to develop as a learning organisation. This will enable them to take appropriate actions to adapt and improve where required (Drobnjak, Stothard, Talbot, Watkins and McDowall, 2013; Stothard, Talbot, Drobnjak and Fischer, 2013).

In addressing this organisational challenge key Army stakeholders and personnel identified shared vision as one of their priorities for study. The Australian Army (2009b) recognise the importance and role that shared vision may play in helping it become a learning organisation. This review of literature will help to inform a series of case studies designed to investigate the significance and utility/functionality of shared vision and other Learning Organisation tenets within sections of the Australian Army.

## 2. Introduction

The concept of a vision is present in organisations, regardless of size, structure and function. The concept can also be applied at the team and individual level. Evidence of the utility of a vision can be found anywhere from organisational manuals to the minds of athletes. For this reason the study of vision spreads across a wide range of academic literature. Articles have been published in Business Management, Leadership, Education and Learning, Organisational Studies, and many other fields. A shared vision is a vision that is supported and fostered by multiple people, promoting cohesion, commonality, and trust amongst individuals (Senge, 1992). While this report draws upon the concept of shared vision as used by Senge (1992; 2006), it can also be referred to as ‘vision for the organisation’ (Foster and Akdere, 2007). Schippers, Den Hartog, Koopman and van Knippenberg (2008) also refer to a “shared team vision” (p. 1594), whereas Hodgkinson (2002) uses the term “a shared strategic vision” (p.89). While these refer to types of shared visions, shared visions can also be conceptualised with respect to the process of making a vision shared, such as Dvir, Kass and Shamir (2004) who refer to it as “vision assimilation”(p.127). Senge’s ideas on shared vision and the learning organisation although not the most comprehensive interpretations, have been used as the basis for this literature review, as his book ‘The Fifth Discipline’ is widely known and therefore a good source for introducing the concept (Ortenblad, 2007). The theories surrounding shared

vision and the learning organisation can help to provide context and clarity to an often intangible notion.

A shared vision also requires the consideration of certain qualities and antecedents when generating and implementing it into an organisation. However, extant barriers derived from organisational culture and structure can undermine its ability to contribute to strategic thinking and organisational change. This report aims to highlight and address the main elements, antecedents, barriers and benefits of achieving a shared vision. It will also consider how these enablers and inhibitors then relate to the realisation of an actionable shared vision within the Australian Army. The Australian Army has identified shared vision as being one of its ten core learning organisation tenets, necessary for the maintenance of a supportive learning environment (Drobnjak et al., 2013).

### **3. Learning Organisation Theory and Shared Vision**

Shared vision makes up one of the disciplines of Learning Organisation theory (Senge, 2006). Marsick and Watkins describe the Learning Organisation as “a living, breathing organism that creates the space that enables people and systems to learn, to grow, and to endure” (1999, p. 210). There are a number of theories on the Learning Organisation and shared vision, and these are briefly introduced below.

According to Senge (2006), the Learning Organisation is a new way for organisations to centre themselves on the foundation of learning both at an employee, and team level and hence contribute to organisational effectiveness. Senge (2006) centres this in the discipline of “Systems Thinking” where all people and aspects of an organisation and its functions, or actions are connected (p. 7). The organisation is a community where the whole is smarter and more resilient than any individual. Shared vision exists concurrently with personal mastery to maintain an organisation’s progress as a learning organisation. Personal Mastery relates to “continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively” (Senge, 1992, p. 7). It provides the spirit that an organisation needs to create without fear of failure, with shared vision acting as a vehicle for fostering long term success through employee contribution and commitment (Senge, 2006). A shared vision answers the important question, “What do we want to create?” (Senge, 1992, p. 206).

Alternatively, Ortenblad (2004) proposes four aspects needed to create an integrated Learning Organisation model. The four aspects relate to (1) learning as a consequence of work within a (2) supportive, facilitative environment that (3) is flexible and can adapt to changes. Individual and team learning can then be returned to the organisation (4).

According to Ortenblad (2004) all four aspects need to be present, but to differing degrees depending on the organisational needs. Marsick and Watkins (1999) propose that the Learning Organisation is a complex set of ideas that is open to organisational uniqueness. Each organisation has its own barriers and strengths that can help or hinder the desire to



be a learning organisation. Some organisations may only require a change or consolidation of focus, rather than a complete overhaul. The vision helps determine and maintain this collective focus and directs learning to achieve the desired goals and outcomes of an organisation.

A Learning Organisation is helpful in providing and promoting workers growth and development (Lee-Kelley, Blackman and Hurst, 2007). However, for this to occur, employees must be situated within an organisational context that comprises shared norms, values, and a clear vision to provide direction. Achieving this vision is crucial for fostering independent, self-directed employees (Ortenblad, 2004). Vision then is the starting point that can help guide the direction learning takes (Watkins and Marsick, 1993).

## **4. Elements of a good vision**

Shared vision is seen as a vital component for the success of a Learning Organisation; but what makes a good vision, and how is it shared? Research has identified a number of elements and prerequisites of a good vision. Dvir et al. (2004), contend that the vision needs to be desirable, realistic, achievable, and something that can be comprehended and therefore accepted by employees. For this reason, it is important to consider the language used around the vision, it “provides the foundations for action, feedback and synthesis in organisations” so it should be unambiguous (Thomas and Allen, 2006, p. 136). Kantabutra and Avery (2010) believe that a vision’s content and character impact on the way it is shared but what makes it highly successful is the vision’s ability to cater for, and appeal to all employees’ interests. Therefore, a shared vision should be something that signifies benefits for all who are involved with the organisation (Dvir et al., 2004).

Morden (1997) also proposes that a good vision should enable employees and the organisation to imagine it as a reality. The vision should be able to be transformed from something conceptual into something that is actionable for employees. This helps make the vision effective and sustainable. Kantabutra and Avery (2010) believe a good vision inspires employees to think of the future and provides them and the organisation with an optimistic challenge that is stable, clear and concise. A good vision is one that addresses both short-term goals and long-term aspirations (Dvir et al., 2004). The vision should act as a guide that allows for diverse practices, individual interpretations and creativity. This means that the vision can change. In fact the vision should be reviewed and altered when necessary to maintain its meaning and applicability to the organisation. This ensures that an organisation remains able to adapt to changes both internally and externally (Lewis, 1997). When an organisation has a vision comprising these important elements it can have a positive effect on the employees and the organisation.

Dvir et al. (2004) conducted research with six technology firms looking at the leaders’ vision creation, its detail and integration, and their impact on emotionally specific commitment to the organisation. The authors found positive relationships between vision components and emotional dedication to the organisation. This highlights the importance

of the content but also the 'shared' aspect of the vision. The conclusion was that incorporating social value content in the vision could be important for an employee's emotional commitment.

Through their own research and review of literature, Kantabutra and Avery (2010) identified that when creating and implementing a shared vision it is sometimes not distinguishable from mission statements and organisational values. The communication and application of vision can also vary according to leader, context, and content. So, to avoid confusion the definition and common characteristics of a shared vision need to be communicated and utilized in a consistent manner to strengthen its potential.

*The vision needs to be clear, consistent, challenging and appeal to all employees' interests to become shared.*

## **5. Antecedents to Shared Vision**

The literature provides some suggestions as to the key precursors or antecedents to the successful development, implementation, and maintenance of a shared vision. These include, Personal Vision, Learning Organisation Disciplines, Leadership and Communication.

### **5.1 Personal Vision**

Bui and Baruch (2010) propose that a shared personal vision must come before a truly shared organisational vision. Furthermore, an organisation with the use of personal mastery can encourage the development of personal vision. Hodgkinson (2000) agrees, proposing that employees need to convey their own visions to share a group vision. Additionally, if employees are given the chance to develop and align their personal vision, with the organisational vision, it can help improve job satisfaction. Developing and aligning an employees' personal vision with the organisational vision can be assisted in part by giving employees access to information, opportunities for self-development, and through employer openness (Lee-Kelley et al., 2007).

Therefore shared vision is connected with personal vision. It also requires attention and time if a shared vision is to be developed and nurtured by all members of an organisation (Senge, 2006).

*Organisations can help develop a shared vision by encouraging personnel to cultivate and share their personal visions.*

### **5.2 Learning Organisation Principles/Disciplines**

The effectiveness and ultimate success of a shared vision requires the presence, and practice, of the other Learning Organisation Disciplines/Principles (Senge, 2006). Each

principle contributes in some way to the success of the other principles and to the overall learning organisation outcomes. (Hodgkinson, 2000). This is demonstrated by Griego, Geroy and Wright (2000) who found that vision was listed as a key component for employees to consider their workplace a learning organisation. However, other components included:

- the effective distribution of knowledge
- acknowledgement of employees output
- team learning

Learning was considered important, because it helps to generate or create the vision. Learning does this by equipping employees and teams with the skills, collective understanding and hence confidence to approach the challenge of developing as a learning organisation (Hodgkinson, 2000).

Thomas and Allen (2006) believe a more effective shared vision can be accessed through the practice or presence of “double-loop learning”, where you test accepted convention and attitudes (p. 134). What is most important to remember is that employees can influence the success of learning organisation practices. The key aim should be to keep employees feeling positive, motivated and committed through supporting the desire for further learning. Employees perceptions will also benefit from the organisation recognising and rewarding those who tackle challenges and produce good work in the interests of the vision (Griego et al., 2000).

*Fostering the other aspects of a learning organisation will help to develop and maintain a shared vision within an organisation.*

### 5.3 Leadership

Thomas and Allen (2006) identified that without leadership and shared vision, learning in itself will not create a learning organisation. The decisions of senior personnel shape culture, structure and the direction of the organisation (Paroby and White, 2010; Schein, 1992). Hence, the role of leadership in helping create an effective shared vision that is embraced, and used by employees was very prominent in the literature. Kantabutra and Avery (2010) state that:

every leader induces his/her followers to act on the vision by using a range of techniques, such as legitimate authority, model[ing], intellectual stimulation, goal-setting, rewarding and punishing, organizational restructuring, and team-building. (p. 38).

Shared vision also requires management to be accountable and organisationally aware, so that the employee's reality is taken into consideration when developing the vision (Paroby and White, 2010 ). Dvir et al. (2004) believe that individual perception is important to the vision and eventual commitment, but so is the leader in creating an employee's connection to their organisation.

Paroby and White (2010) view enquiry and challenging/correcting assumptions as being central to leadership. Leaders ensure that the vision is in-line with employee's needs, and is optimistic and future-directed (Hodgkinson, 2000; Schippers et al. 2008). Hodgkinson (2002) believes the leader and employees need to work together in a reciprocal way. Leaders need to promote sharing and inclusion through dialogue, by acting as a facilitator who shares, communicates openly, and maintains an atmosphere of trust. This can be difficult due to other work role demands and so may require a change in attitude at the leadership level. In changing environments leaders must be people "who are self-aware, adaptive, and agile..." (Hesselbein and Shinseki, 2004, xviii). Leaders must be willing to work with employees, casting aside their own agendas to work towards shared objectives (Hodgkinson, 2000).

Mental models can also have an undesirable effect on shared vision, if left unchecked they have the potential to limit creativity and adaptability (Senge, 1990). Mental models are our established views, assumptions and beliefs about how things are or should be. This can inhibit our ability to see things differently; this includes the role of a vision in the organisation (Senge, 1992; Thomas and Allen, 2006).

Leadership can also influence, and be influenced by shared vision (Thomas and Allen, 2006). This implies that it is not just the presence of leadership but the type, and quality of leadership that is important to the success of shared vision. Thomas and Allen (2006) believe that; in an organisation with good leadership, shared vision can act as a stimulus and binding agent. Hodgkinson (2002) found that participant's believed a good leader with vision was needed, but more significantly, both actions and words need to reflect the vision. From this alignment of rhetoric and behaviour, employees would commit and begin to act towards the vision. Therefore, a vision through leadership gives an organisation and its people direction and energy (Morden, 1997).

The type of leader, using shared vision, also contributes to the performance of teams within an organisation. Schippers et al. (2008) suggest that "[a] transformational leader" who presents the proposed collective identity is important for motivation, dedication, innovation and awareness within the employee and team (p. 1598). This type of leader, providing a clear shared vision, leads to increased reflexivity, which encourages the sharing of ideas within a team and contributes to improved performance (Schippers et al., 2008).

*Leaders are essential at every stage of a shared vision's development. They are instrumental in its creation and communication but also to employee acceptance and implementation.*

## 5.4 Communication

Communication is an important antecedent for shared vision. Not just what is communicated, but how the ideas are communicated in order to gain understanding. Communication is useful through the creation, and implementation stages of shared vision, and for determining the future direction of the organisation. Strachan (1996)

highlights that it is important for tangible success that the vision is not commanded, but shared, allowing employees to identify and therefore honestly commit to the vision. Appelbaum et al. (2009b) also believe shared vision necessitates a focus on effective communication; their findings indicated that questions about shared vision were regularly misunderstood. Specifically, the findings from their study conducted with a Canadian production company indicated that the vision was not effectively shared or communicated. In this instance the researchers have attributed the confusion and misunderstandings surrounding their interview questions, on shared vision, to the organisation's poor communication of their vision. This may just represent poor communication on behalf of the researchers.

Good communication however, is important when initially attempting to approach and implement a shared vision because it helps to address any unsettling effects, negative attitudes, and find common ground (Eigeles, 2003). Shared vision helps give the organisation, and its personnel, drive and purpose. However, employees need to have a clear understanding of the vision (Paroby and White, 2010). Appelbaum et al. (2009a), hypothesised that “[l]ow organizational commitment (citizenship) is due to the lack of a shared corporate vision and ineffective communication” (p. 240). It was found that commitment was positively correlated with shared vision and communication (Appelbaum et al., 2009b).

Shared vision can also improve the effectiveness and success of communication within an organisation. Schippers et al. (2008) found that shared vision can provide teams with a shared view and goal that aids communication about their current position and future direction. It can help them reflect on and discuss their current methods and tactics. Hodgkinson (2000) believes it is also important in larger, complex organisations to maintain effective communication, and examine the organisation as a whole, to ensure cohesion. Human Resources in an organisation can play a key role in communicating the vision (Foster and Akdere, 2007).

*Quality communication is important to achieving a shared vision. A shared vision can also improve the quality of communication within an organisation.*

## 6. Benefits of Shared Vision

Developing shared vision, in the process of becoming a learning organisation, can have many positive outcomes. These outcomes have the potential to benefit both the organisation and the employee. For instance, employees and leaders may feel more empowered, giving them more autonomy and keeping them working, and learning for the organisation (Lee-Kelley et al., 2007; Yeo, 2002).

## 6.1 Empowerment

When creating a shared vision, if you don't include employees in the process they are more likely to just obey the vision than truly commit to it (Senge, 2006). Trust built from sharing can provide the opportunity for employees to have more freedom, options, and autonomy in their work. A shared vision produces workers who are motivated towards self-improvement in hopes of reaching this vision. Employees see their relevance and look for challenges to develop their potential (Lee-Kelley et al., 2007).

The issue of personnel empowerment within an organisation can present challenges particularly if the organisation is looking to make changes. Initially the organisation needs to determine that its employees want the responsibility that comes with empowerment. Organisations then need to foster the conditions that will enable employees to be involved (Coleman 1996; Schein, 1999). In their study looking at the factors that contribute to employee turnover within an organisation, Appelbaum et al. (2009b) found that employees liked to be able to contribute to the organisation, by being consulted and acknowledged for their opinion during organisational change. Feeling involved improved their commitment. Thomas and Allen (2006) have found that participation in the organisation is important to obtain untapped knowledge. Employees also need access to certain knowledge in order to fulfil the vision.

The simple act of sharing the vision/information can be more important than empowerment or motivation, but with these you can help improve staff satisfaction (Kantabutra and Avery, 2010). Lee-Kelley et al. (2007) proposed that the learning organisation would improve, or maintain an employee's job satisfaction and keep them from leaving the organisation. The results indicated that the learning organisation principle of shared vision was positively related to all the facets of satisfaction; these included challenge, reward, co-worker relationships, and comfort. Therefore, out of all the learning organisation principles, shared vision could be vital in retaining workers (Lee-Kelley et al., 2007). However, Appelbaum et al.'s (2009b) study also found that employees were reluctant to say they were dissatisfied with aspects of their work because there were not many other suitable job prospects. This indicates that a dominate perception among employees was; communicating dissatisfaction would lead to termination.

Weldy and Gillis (2010) conducted a study examining perceptions at different levels of an organisation, with respect to the success in the process of becoming a learning organisation. Managers were found to have the highest perception of success, with employees having the lowest. A suggestion made by the authors was that the quality of communication, and limited access to information meant employees were not as aware of the changes and progress occurring within the organisation. Results suggest that the employees lived experience was different to managers within the organisation. This result is similar to the Army Learning Organisation Questionnaire profile, in which higher ranks had a greater perception of success with respect to learning practices, processes and culture within the organisation than lower ranks. (Drobnjak et al. 2013; Stothard et al. 2013). Weldy and Gillis (2010) also found that empowerment of employees was assumed by management but not perceived by employees. The differences in perception were seen to be caused by ineffective communication and involvement. It was concluded that

employee's need to be empowered to make decisions. They need access to information but also given the ability to apply or implement actions based on these decisions. Organisations need to facilitate this effort and allow employees to contribute by making their own decisions that are supported by solid initiatives.

Dymock and McCarthy (2006) also looked at the perceptions of employees in organisations aspiring to be learning ones. In their study with an Australian Manufacturing Company, empowerment was scored lowest by employees despite the ability to contribute, self-direct, approachable management, dialogue, vision awareness, and collaboration across teams. However there were some employee concerns that may have contributed to this outcome. Firstly, there was scepticism that the learning was provided more to elicit involvement in the organisation, than for personal development. These findings imply that the organisation was motivated by interests other than employee development, in that the learning was not for their own benefit but the organisations. A contradiction also existed in that management tried to empower its employees, while demanding they continue to learn or find other employment. Additionally, not all employees were looking to future career progression or learning. Managers were also reluctant to let employees participate at the expense of their work (Dymock and McCarthy, 2006). The process of empowering employees should also allow for the "agency of learners in shaping their learning trajectories" (Talbot and O'Toole, 2009, p. 350). Instituting personnel empowerment therefore also needs to consider the organisations current culture, structures and what they are designed to produce. An assessment should be made with respect to what changes empowerment would require of the organisation but also its personnel (Schein, 1999).

Empowerment of employees, through the vision, is also related to effective communication. An employee's difficulty in understanding or identifying with a vision may come from inconsistent messages. For example, an employee might be asked to take more responsibility but not have control over what is needed to do this work (Marsick and Watkins, 1999). Progress towards empowerment requires leaders making the vision a working reality for employees where they can feel supported in their efforts. This may be achieved by an organisational vision being translated and located at the team level. The vision then applies to team tasks and aspirations but maintains the goals of the organisation (Watkins and Marsick, 1993).

When organisations and their employees share a vision, employees may be given more trust and authority because the organisation knows they are headed in the same direction. Sharing a vision may help reduce misunderstandings, and give employees greater interest in what they do and why. Employees may develop a stronger bond with their workmates and a greater sense of pride (Lee-Kelley et al. 2007). Hodgkinson (2002) believes if employees feel a connection, and responsibility to the vision they will most likely feel like a valued member of the organisation and accept responsibility for their decisions and actions. Leaders who empower their personnel give them confidence in their ability to do the work and achieve the goals set by an organisational vision (Sashkin and Sashkin, 2003).

*Empowerment is important to enable employees to implement the goals of the vision but also to their acceptance of the vision.*

## 6.2 Decision-Making/Goal-Setting

Appelbaum et al. (2009b) found the vision was important for a committed attitude and goal-setting, whereby employees understood the relevance of their work to organisational goals. Personnel then set their own goals in line with the organisation and maintained an awareness of the vision through relevant feedback. Wang and Rafiq (2009) see 'goal orientation' as 'shared vision'. Shared vision allows organisations to use multiple perspectives, and align with their goals.

The absence of shared vision does not necessarily imply that employees will be less enthusiastic or committed but it does allow personnel to get the most out of opportunities by providing focus and direction. A shared vision, that is goal focused, partnered with organisational diversity in people and ideas, assists organisational learning and success (Wang and Rafiq, 2009). Yeo's (2002) research looked at the issue of organisational learning and its connection to organisational performance, and in particular, what factors affect this relationship. Shared vision was seen as something that provides direction through being clear and actionable, producing results that match goals. Shared vision helps organisational learning in partnership with leaders, and is most effective for work with diverse tasks and demands (Yeo, 2002).

Lindley and Wheeler (2001) propose a model "The Learning Square" that highlights some major contributors to framing "strategic decisions in a learning context" (p. 115). Shared vision in action could lead to organisational effectiveness through the consequence of strategic evaluation. Lindley and Wheeler (2001) state; "[a] set of multi-dimensional goals arguably will be more capable of supporting the breadth of a shared vision than one-dimensional goals" (p. 116). However, views and goals need to align through a shared vision to successfully implement a strategic decision (Lindley and Wheeler, 2001).

*A shared vision enables people to set goals and make decisions with confidence that they are in line with the aims of the organisation.*

## 7. Barriers to Shared Vision

When attempting to create and implement a shared vision the organisational environment is vital to success. Thomas and Allen (2006) propose that aspects of an organisation like structure and policies guide decisions; they "translate perceptions, goals and norms into actions" (p. 131). This finding implies that you need a supportive framework to enable a shared vision to be translated into action.

### 7.1 Organisational Culture

Goh and Richards (1997) looked at determining an organisations learning adeptness, stressing the importance of implementing the learning organisation principles with consideration to the particular organisations' resources and culture. Becoming a learning



organisation can begin by working with what the organisation already possesses. Employees also need to feel empowered as a member of the organisation who can collaborate and goal set. To achieve this, an organisation needs to make shared vision, communication, reward, and personnel participation priorities in their organisational culture (Paroby and White, 2010).

It is the interactions between subordinates and their leaders that helps shape culture and gives vision its direction (Paroby and White, 2010). Eigeles (2003) believes that if all managers, and employees of an organisation are pulling in the same direction then this leads to a more efficient and effective use of resources. Achieving this requires getting people to freely agree to commit to a direction, beginning with management. According to Eigeles (2003), vision helps create the organisational culture that all people work within. Schein 1990 (cited in Paroby and White, 2010) believes it is also the individuals and their interactions that help mould the culture and guide the focus of the vision. However, more than one vision, may lead to subcultures. These cultures can affect the team actions but a common goal reduces conflict, and encourages collaboration. A shared vision also requires leaders being located within an organisation that supports dialogue, and the use of learning to address policies, strategies and culture (Eigeles, 2003).

Chang and Lee (2007) also contend that each organisation has its own unique characteristics/culture that impacts on its processes. To explore this, Chang and Lee (2007) conducted a study looking at “the relationship among leadership, organizational culture, operation of learning organization and job satisfaction of employee”[s] (p. 157). The main finding was that leadership and culture, through the impact of the learning organisation, improved job satisfaction. However, it is also important to look at whether the current culture of an organisation will impede the process of becoming a learning organisation and adhering to the principles (Chang and Lee, 2007). Senge and Sterman (1992), report that many organisations want, and report, to change but practice remains the same. Changes are documented at an organisational level but this does not translate to action at the personnel, practical, behavioural level. Both leaders and personnel fall back to what they know, what is culturally and structurally familiar. They suggest a deep look at mental models and traditional practices.

Enabling employees to feel they can contribute to the shared vision is both hindered and located within organisational culture. This is where leaders need to be able to empower their employees by giving them encouragement and responsibility during the creation and implementation of the vision (Hodgkinson, 2002; Watkins and Marsick, 1993). An organisational culture should encourage its employees’ work/implementation efforts, despite success or failure, and consider their needs. An organisational culture should be accepting of shared vision and what it could achieve for the organisation (Hodgkinson, 2002).

*The organisational culture can determine the success or failure of shared vision at all stages of development.*

## 7.2 Organisational Structure

Strachan (1996) believes larger organisations benefit from coordination, with respect to views, but an obstacle can be the current structure of the organisation. An organisation has long held ways of doing things. Eigeles (2003) encourages equal collaboration excluding the display of hierarchy, where all contribute, analyse and decide together.

Paroby and White (2010) believe there is a need to be aware of the current state of an organisation, to create an effective shared vision. Highly structured organisations also depend heavily on leadership, which can be problematic, because it requires good leadership to have a truly representative shared vision. Hodgkinson (2000) also states that there can be difficulties when trying to create and implement a vision. These include; upper management not valuing the concept, or allowing their own opinions to stall the process. Organisations also run the risk of losing sight of the shared aspect of the vision as a consequence of their structure. The different roles and responsibilities within an organisation can keep it from functioning as a collective entity. Organisations need leadership that is open to incorporating other organisational member's views and ideas for the future (Lewis, 1997).

To be a learning organisation requires the existence of a purpose that is provided through a vision (Goh and Richards, 1997). Strachan (1996) proposes that to act towards the vision may require changes to the organisation. These changes may be targeted towards behaviour or strategy but can also occur at the structural and cultural level, and teamwork is essential in this ongoing process. Rule driven, public organisations seemed to struggle most with the implementation and success of the learning organisation because of bureaucratic constraints on change efforts (Goh and Richards, 1997). Goh and Richards (1997) suggest that it requires an examination of the internal workings of the organisation, making adjustments to policy/practice, and remaining clear about why these adjustments are required.

Shared vision requires all in the organisation to change and adapt not just the organisation alone. Personnel need to commit, act and reflect on this change. They need to reflect on what barriers their own thinking and behaviour creates in their ability to change with the organisation (Kofman and Senge, 1993). As Kofman and Senge (1993) contend, "[i]t is not what the vision is, but what the vision does that matters" (p. 16).

There are ways to work within the unique structure of an organisation. Dvir et al. (2004) highlight different ways that organisations share the vision. There is the vision generated, in a hierarchical organisation, by the CEO and management, where employees just execute the vision. Alternatively, you can have employees that create the vision but this allows the CEO to be less involved with the employees. "Traditionally an organization creates a vision and then expects its employees to buy into it" (Hitchcock, 1996, p. 28). Dvir et al. (2004) believe to obtain a fully affective vision you need all within the organisation sharing the vision making process. Hitchcock's (1996) findings indicated that an organisation's vision did not always have value to employees on a day-to-day basis. They could see the relevance of their work more in their job than in relation to the organisation. They also didn't feel like the custodians of the vision. Hitchcock (1996) therefore suggests that vision

can be more successful at the team level. A team vision can help discussions about the future, and provide a measure and standard for performance. It becomes a common ground at which to base one-self when challenging current practices, or traditions. The vision helps set priorities and provides a joint purpose for the team, while also supporting the larger organisational vision. However, this will only work if members develop a personal vision and have a clear understanding of the team, and organisational visions. (Hitchcock, 1996). Personnel need to know that what they do has an impact on the success or failure of the organisational vision (Lewis, 1997).

Kantabutra and Avery (2010) believe shared vision is essential for implementing changes, but it needs to be created with the size and location(s) of the organisation in mind to be most effective and inspirational.

*The barrier of organisational structure can be mitigated by communication, facilitative leadership, and attention given to the relevance of the vision to all levels of the organisation.*

## 8. Shared Vision and the Army

### 8.1 Shared Vision and the U.S Army

Paroby and White (2010) believe that strict guidelines help sustain and maintain organisational understanding. To implement the learning organisation principles, that include shared vision in a structured organisation, demands accountability and a values focus. This can help to build trust which will lead to influence. According to Paroby and White (2010) the U.S Army's team and values focus, and ability to adapt makes its culture like, or appear to be like, a learning organisation. While this acts as a good foundation, there are many barriers created by hierarchy that warrant attention (Lewis, 1997; Paroby and White, 2010).

In his paper, "The Army and its future Objective Force," Scott argues that the US Army needs to take on qualities of a learning organisation to operate now and into the future (p. 1). Scott (2002) contends that consideration needs to be given to the factors that shape Army culture including; soldiers day to day lives and doctrine. Army should use "Systems-thinking" which is difficult because:

The United States Army, like most hierarchical organizations, has a hard time analyzing these complex systems because it wants to see, categorize and understand all of the individual parts that make up the system (p. 4).

Scott's focus in the paper is on developing a model for the Army Objective Force; he has taken work by Senge and other L.O theorists to highlight some key components that the Army wish to focus on to create a Learning Model for their organisation. These components are "Soldier Mastery", "Relational Dominance", "Unit Vision", "Dominant Operations" and "Systems Understanding" (2002, p. 22). Scott (2002) sees the idea of a

shared vision as important for the Army and its units, as “[t]his vision will provide the “fuel” that burns inside every soldier as every member of the unit strives for excellence” (p. 17).

Within this paper shared vision is expressed as a “Unit Vision” (Scott, 2002, p. 16). The idea is that not all visions fit everyone; employees need to see the vision as something that can help them achieve their own ‘goals and desires’ through facilitation by a good leader. The vision reflects experience and sets parameters for performance. It also necessitates the acceptance of errors, (to learn) and good training (Scott, 2002). He believes “personal mastery, shared vision and team learning” should be an important focus for the Army (p. 18).

The Learning Organisation principles may help change army culture, but to gain commitment and satisfied personnel, a learning organisation requires leadership that communicates an understandable, goal relevant vision that is translated into action. Additionally, the concept of vision presented by Scott (2002) may be a better understood, time saver, in a highly structured decision-making framework like the army, where it is harder for everyone to contribute to the creation of the organisational vision. It is better than no vision which can reduce anticipation and performance

Communication has been noted as important for shared vision, however Lewis (2008) states that “[t]ime is also a limitation to dialogue. Time is a finite commodity especially for an over-tasked Army” (p. 35). So time management is a major responsibility for leadership. Culture is also an important factor to consider, particularly if it discourages criticism. An aspect of this is trust, that can be affected by misunderstandings surrounding the intentions of differing viewpoints, particularly if they originate from lower ranks (Lewis, 2008).

Williams (2007) states in his report that the Army’s vision should be inculcated like their values; “Army Values are inculcated beginning in Basic Training” and are visually accessible or part of daily habits (p.5). The army needs to address defensiveness and create a culture that allows for openness, to get to the reality of the soldiers existence. Training is also needed for soldiers to understand the learning organisation and what is required in order to meet the expectations of a learning organisation (Williams, 2007).

## **8.2 Shared Vision and Australian Army Doctrine**

Vision can supply the Army with an aim and a way forward. It promotes a focus on a desired future organisational condition through drawing attention to the current state of an organisation and informing the development of strategies to move forward. It can help give the Australian Army resilience during complex and challenging times (Australian Army, 2008a).

The Australian Army already has a vision:

The Army's vision is to become a world-class, adaptive army, enabled to fight in order to win joint land operations in Australia's national interests. (Australian Army, 2009a, xvi)

The main challenge for the Australian Army is to turn an abstract theoretical concept such as shared vision into something applicable and achievable for the Army Organisation. This effort begins with what is contained in the Army Doctrine. Army Doctrine is viewed as its "collective wisdom and experience", "is dynamic and constantly evolving; it draws from the past to inform the future" (Australian Army, 2008b, 1). It clearly communicates that the presence of a vision, that is shared, is an important element of a well-functioning learning organisation. Additionally a shared vision is enabled through a supportive learning environment (Australian Army, 2009b).

Australian Army Doctrine defines and promotes the principles of the Learning Organisation including shared vision; dedicating an entire chapter, in its leadership doctrine, to vision and its value. "The discipline of a shared vision creates a focus for coordinated purpose. Supported by values and guided by strategy, the vision bridges the gap between today and tomorrow. It is essential for a vision statement to be shared, understood and widely communicated" (Australian Army, 2002, 8-6).

Although the Australian Army doctrine draws heavily from existing literature, the doctrine itself exemplifies elements of a good shared vision. It has a short and long term focus; it attempts to make its content actionable for personnel; it incorporates the values and needs of all of army, guiding personnel and providing the opportunity for all to align with its purpose. Doctrine like a good vision is constantly revised and updated if necessary, to accurately reflect the direction, needs, and desired future of the Army Organisation (Australian Army, 2002; Marsick and Watkins, 1999). The presence of Mission Command already provides an indication of what a shared vision can offer the Army. In that, with the knowledge of the Commander's aim and intent personnel can make decisions and act independently with confidence in their purpose (Australian Army, 2008a).

### 8.2.1 Army Leadership and Vision

The Australian Defence Force highlights the integral role of leadership in aligning people, and shaping culture within the organisation. Leaders are responsible for guiding people towards a vision that is clearly communicated, providing a focus and point of commonality amongst people in Defence. This vision also acts as a point of reference for people in day to day decision-making and helps them to remain cognisant of the relevance of their work and effort (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007).

Within Army doctrine, leaders are people who contribute to the maintenance of morale and a positive organisational climate through the quality of their leadership and the trust they develop with personnel (Australian Army, 2008b). Personnel look to leaders as a model or standard to follow. Thus leaders are presented with a great responsibility "[to]

develop their personal character, acquire knowledge and skills, and take action to inspire team members to achieve desired goals" (Australian Army, 2008a, 3-1).

"The Army Leadership Model (ALM)", influenced by John Adair's (1968) theory of leadership, makes vision its central component, signifying its importance to keeping an organisation efficient, focused, and purposeful. (Australian Army, 2008a, 3-12). According to the model, leaders begin by creating a clear future-focused vision that also considers current tasks and missions. They get people to commit to the vision through effective communication, and their ability to inspire and motivate (Australian Army, 2008a). In this way the vision is not forced onto personnel but introduced, explained and supported (Australian Army, 2009b). Clear communication is a key factor, "It informs, motivates, controls and expresses emotion" (Australian Army, 2002, 6-1). Leaders however must remain aware of the depreciating effect of misused power and personnel's own goals and level of understanding on the success of what is communicated (Australian Army, 2002). The doctrine indicates that the Australian Army knows how a shared vision is supposed to be generated within an organisation. However, the leader's communication of the vision would need to improve to counteract the limited subordinate involvement caused by the requisite organisational hierarchy.

Leaders are inescapably located and operate within an existing common understanding, whether through Army culture or its countless sub-cultures (Australian Army, 2002). However, leaders help shape the culture at the team level, they are responsible for uniting their subordinates to the team vision (Australian Army, 2008a). According to Army doctrine, effective teamwork requires a shared vision and shared goals. Specifically, a vision that is clearly communicated, and explained with attainable goals. Members can then understand and see the value of what they have been tasked to achieve (Australian Army, 2008a). Team members also then have the opportunity to contribute their experience when translating the vision into action (Australian Army, 2002). From these propositions and the idea of the U.S 'unit vision' it could be argued that within the context of the Army, a vision may be more serviceable, and valuable, at the team level.

The vision channels effort and improves effectiveness however leaders also require the ability to recognise opportunities, and needs of personnel. Leaders are shapers of Army leadership culture, policy, climate, and environment (Australian Army, 2008a). Through vision they can build innovative practices, this innovation can be supported by fostering "an organisational climate that encourages inquiry, debate, experimentation and informed change" (Australian Army, 2008a, 2-27). The strong foundation that a vision can provide allows for a more robust response during difficult times. Theories presented in Army doctrine on leadership and shared vision seems to indicate that the process requires a life-long commitment to development and a change in thinking (Australian Army, 2002).

Australian Army Doctrine moves between individual, team and organisational vision. Vision is informed by needs, and values, whether this is at a team or organisational level. It also helps inform decisions, missions, and strategies. These are what transform the vision into something actionable. The vision represents a desired future for the Army organisation, guiding the strategic plan, decision-making, standards, and informing its mission. The leader develops the vision, communicates and makes it relevant for all

personnel, but their efforts must also incorporate supplying resources, self-development, and periodical assessment of the team vision and its applicability to the organisational vision. A vision is created that caters for the organisation it serves. It also unites all in the organisation towards a supported, common, motivating purpose (Australian Army, 2002).

### **8.3 Potential Implications for the Australian Army**

There are a number of implications for the Australian Army that emerge from review of the literature and Army Doctrine:

- Firstly, the Army may benefit from revisiting its current vision to assess whether the units and organisation are aligned. Are personnel adequately informed or aware of what the current Army vision is? At the same time asking the question; does it accurately represent the needs and values of all personnel? The answer to these questions may help to indicate whether the vision can be successfully shared.
- The relevant literature and doctrine also indicate that leaders will need to take on a central role in the communication, role-modelling and support of the shared vision. This may require facilitative leadership; self-aware individuals that look within the organisation and the wider community to create a vision that incorporates personnel values, goals and desires at an organisational level.
- Fostering a shared vision at the team level may have greater power to encourage shared understanding within the Army.
- The Army will need to assess how a shared vision can be implemented across the organisation. In doing so, it would need to consider what resources are required to transform this vision from rhetoric to practice, as well as consideration of how this vision may add value to the organisation. After all, if shared vision can be fitted to the organisation should it not also be interrogated for its applicability? Mission Command and clearly stated shared values and mission statement may be sufficient to create a shared purpose and direction. What may be lacking are the communication, dissemination and active guidance. To accurately address this issue Army will need to come to a shared understanding of what the vision represents for them and what it can provide the organisation and each individual.
- Communication throughout the Army should focus on being clear, articulate, and effective. To truly be effective, all personnel, at all levels, must be provided with the opportunity to provide and receive feedback.
- To generate a shared understanding of the vision the Army could benefit from incorporating vision awareness into training and education initiatives. Addressing how the vision is achieved through each individual, and unit's daily actions. If the Army wants a truly shared vision they need to foster a culture that is supportive of shared vision and what it can provide. This requires an examination of dominant assumptions, perceptions and behaviours.
- The ability to develop, articulate, but also be receptive to vision, yours and others, can also help Army personnel develop the professional mastery they require and aspire to (de Somer and Schmidtchen, 1999).

## 9. Discussion

This review has identified many issues around shared vision that an organisation would need to consider if they desire a shared vision. There are also many 'ideal' recommendations made that may not be practical for all organisations to implement. Predominantly a shared vision is there to give leaders a vehicle for personnel inspiration and direction (Stam, van Knippenberg and Wisse, 2010). So can a shared vision operate in the real world, and can an organisation achieve a common understanding that reaches all levels of the organisation? Well, yes it is possible but attention needs to be drawn to the stages before and after a vision is stated. It is the process of creating the vision but also the communication and implementation of this vision that will determine whether it will be truly shared (Lewis, 1997; Sashkin and Sashkin, 2003). A vision needs to permeate across time and sometimes highly complex organisations. In this sense the vision statement provides stability, enabling for actions to change, accommodating external and internal disruptions, to maintain the focus on the goals of the vision. However, the best vision statement in the world will be useless to an organisation if it is not translated or made relevant to the people charged with the task of pursuing it. After the vision is formed or revised those responsible for communicating can express it through their plans, programs and policies but also through their interactions with others in the organisation. They can also do this by injecting value into the tasks they assign to individuals or groups. In this sense providing them with an indication of the impact of their work in the present but also how it can influence the organisation's trajectory into the future (Sashkin and Sashkin, 2003). This process can be assisted through the organisational strategy as it helps to proactively address and develop a plan to achieve the organisational intent (Rumelt, 2011).

In this author's opinion leaders are essential for a shared vision's proliferation and acceptance across an organisation. Leaders have well-developed knowledge, experience and insight with respect to the future aspirations of the organisation, so they are best placed to communicate, translate and situate the vision in accordance with workplace requirements (Sashkin and Sashkin, 2003). It is those in power at all levels that shapes a culture that will help facilitate this process and negotiate the barriers inherent with a highly structured organisation.

In addition, an examination of the literature showed that organisational culture both impacts and is impacted by leadership. Leaders, through shared vision, also have an impact on an employee's commitment to the organisation. Empowerment and communication are crucial at each stage. In that, an organisational culture needs to exist that communicates and empowers its leadership to create a shared vision. Leaders also need to communicate to, and empower their personnel to achieve a common understanding of the vision. The committed employee then has the opportunity and agency to make decisions and set goals to pursue the aspirations of the vision (Figure 1).



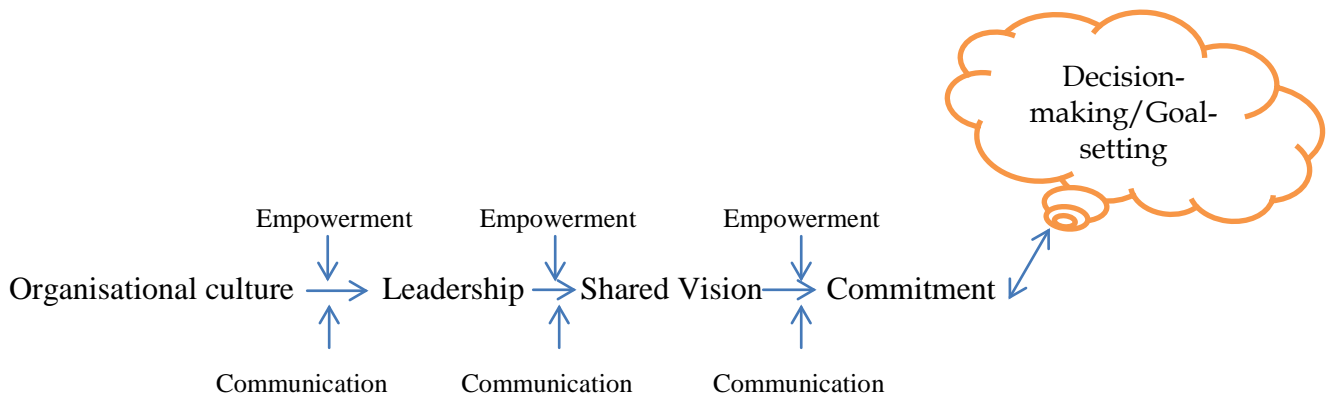


Figure 1: Key theme observed in the literature

Although much has been said about leadership and the vision statement, it is important to point out that an organisation and its personnel rely more on the ‘sharing’ aspect of a shared vision. This includes a shared vision but also shared mission, values and strategy. In addition, although leaders are central to success, the conduit’s through which the vision is actually achieved is the employees. They are the engine of an organisation, so it is imperative that the organisation connect their people to that vision and its goals. Vision is what the leadership wants for the organisation. The mission informs what actions you take, and the strategy informs how the organisation will go about achieving those actions and the goals of its vision. So how can you plan and act without knowing what you want first? An organisation could leave itself vulnerable to inefficient practices and failed attempts at change. Could an organisation operate without a shared vision? Possibly, however the literature proposes that while an organisation may be able to function without a shared vision, it may not reach its full potential with respect to getting the best from personnel, achieving outcomes, and improving performance. Vision is for those organisations that aspire to be more, want more out of their personnel, and wishes to define itself by more than just profit (Lewis, 1997). Although this may sound trite, it does not ignore the importance of strategy or mission. They all have an essential role in the functioning of an organisation.

Hence, the vision is not synonymous with strategy. A shared vision still requires an action plan, one that addresses the challenges and trials of achieving the vision (Rumelt, 2011). Although there are limits to what you can ascribe to a shared vision, adopting a shared vision does not mean that an organisation suspends all critical thought and interrogation of this vision and how it is used. A shared vision can be a mechanism that helps to direct an organisation’s policies, strategies and programs towards the goals it is trying to achieve, while helping to retain engaged employees who have confidence in their leadership. Why not use it? An organisation does not need to lose everything that makes them unique and functional in order to enact a shared vision. A shared vision is about getting people on the same page before the organisation launches into action. Consensus not confusion will drive the organisation.

## 10. Limitations/Gaps in Research

Shared vision as a concept lends itself to harsh scrutiny as much of the literature bases its findings on theory, idealism's and employee perception. There have been limited efforts to obtain tangible empirical evidence for the statements, beliefs and propositions of the authors. However, shared vision cannot always be adequately assessed through using traditional forms of empirical, objective measurement. A mixed method approach allows a more comprehensive view of the impact and functionality of a shared vision within organisations. This enables research findings to provide insight, context as well as information (Lewis, 1997). The gap and challenge for researchers in this area is to add to the quantitative evidence for the utility of shared vision within organisations. In particular, what real effect has the presence of shared vision had on organisational success or overall performance? This area of study also needs to continue to pursue research that examines all levels of the organisation.

More research needs to be conducted that can demonstrate shared visions effectiveness beyond the theoretical, conceptual suppositions that predominant the literature. There are also limits to the extent of the literature covered in this paper as much of it expresses the same key ideas and dominant theories. This does indicate that there is room to extend or explore the concept through further research. Not just extending the definition of the concept, but developing research methodologies and strategies that focus on how to implement shared vision within a variety of organisations.

Literature on shared vision rarely takes a critical look at the concept, seldom asking difficult questions surrounding whether it can actually add additional benefit to every organisation. It is clear that shared vision does not come with an easy four step implementation plan. In reality it is not practical for most organisations to attempt all that is suggested by the literature. So it is important to determine how the vision can be implemented and thereby best serve a variety of organisations. Key literature surrounding the concept of shared vision highlights that it can present challenges for an organisation but authors neglect to address what, if any, negative impacts a working shared vision could have on an organisation. For instance, misused, could a shared vision stifle decision-making as people try to gain organisational consensus on every choice they make? Could this vision be over-prioritised at the expense of a well - considered and detailed strategic plan? (Rumelt, 2011)

It is important to remember that the presence or absence of a vision in an organisation is not the only factor responsible for organisational failures (Longenecker, Simonetti, and Sharkey, 1999). A shared vision in isolation is not sufficient to produce action. Vision can only be useful with a good strategy, values, supportive framework, and accessible information that can help employees translate the vision into action imperatives (Lewis, 1997; Thomas and Allen, 2006).

Some of the literature on shared vision could also be criticised for its lack of clarity with respect to the extent of involvement required or demanded by all levels of the organisation. Employees don't need to create the vision necessarily they just need to

support and agree with the aims. An employees' level of involvement may just pertain to the implementation of the vision (Lewis, 1997; Marsick and Watkins, 1999). However despite these seemingly significant limitations there are indicators of its functionality within organisations as outlined within this paper.

The ALO research program will start to address some of the gaps in shared vision research through a series of case studies. This research will provide an opportunity to conduct a within, and across, case examination of how shared vision is perceived, valued and hence applied within different sections of the Australian Army. Shared vision will also be explored through quantitative methods when analysing our Army Learning Organisation Questionnaire results.

## 11. Conclusion

The literature suggests that shared vision is an important component of the learning organisation. It is positively related to commitment to the organisation and all other disciplines of the learning organisation. The process of becoming a learning organisation helps employee commitment and this commitment then helps its continued development (Forozandeh et al., 2011).

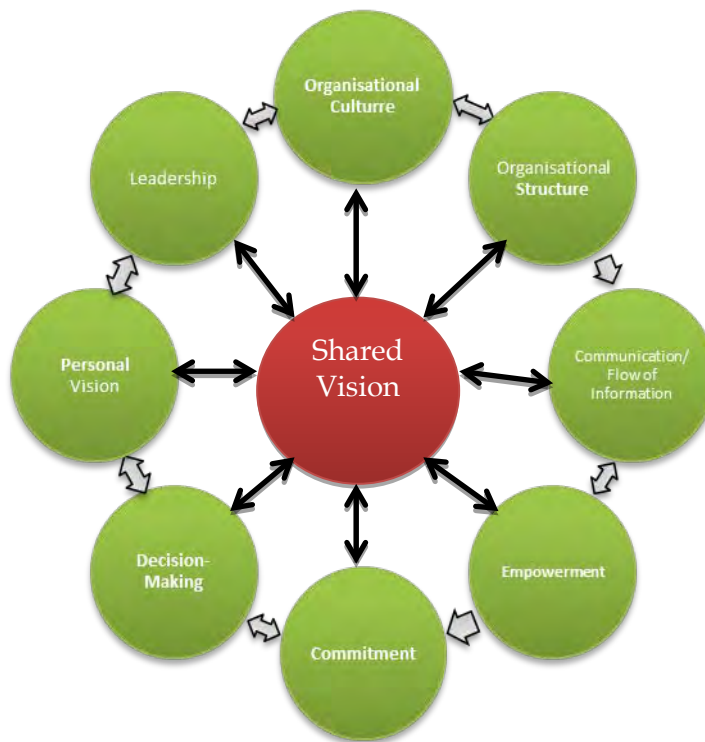


Figure 2: Proposed Relationship of various factors to Shared vision

Figure 2 represents the multitude of factors and their influence on the functionality or achievement of a shared vision within an organisation. It may also act as a valuable visual tool for leadership when determining what hurdles and challenges they may encounter in their efforts to develop a shared vision. Figure 2 could also present key points of leverage an organisation may use to improve the potential acceptance and buy-in of the vision. If nothing else this figure indicates that a shared vision does not function independently within a learning organisation. It should also highlight for the reader that a shared vision feeds back into these different factors, which along with the other learning organisation components (not depicted in this figure) can help to sustain the vision long term.

Hodgkinson (2000) emphasizes the importance of tact, and fitting not just shared vision, but all the learning organisational principles, to the organisation. Organisations need courage to implement shared vision and the other learning organisation principles. Courage to change or alter the culture, but also to remain involved. One limitation of shared vision is that it is perceived as static and abstract. As this report highlights it is also something that can and should be reviewed to maintain its relevance to the organisation.

Goh and Richards (1997) suggest interventions should consider an organisation's type of leadership, size, intentions, readiness and task specification. This is particularly relevant for the Australian Army as it has its own unique organisational elements that will need to be considered when exploring and addressing antecedents and barriers to shared vision. The concept of shared vision as evidenced in this paper is already supported by Army Doctrine. The doctrine highlights the importance of leadership and communication. Through doctrine the Army also communicates the vision's relevance at all levels of the organisation whether that be:

- individual and the development of personal vision
  - unit level and consideration of team culture, and values aligning with organisational vision
- or
- organisational level and its ability to inform decision-making, strategies and actions.

Thus, there exists a solid foundation on which to build strategic initiatives that support personnel in the pursuit of a shared vision. This can help turn the vision from something rhetorical into something that can be applied through completing daily work, tasks or missions.

The Australian Army's aim to develop as a Learning Organisation, should hold it in good stead should they choose to generate and implement a truly shared vision that can empower and guide personnel. The literature highlights that although it requires considerable applied effort, the benefits of developing and nurturing a shared vision can be many and varied for an organisation focussed on continuous improvement.

The Australian Army needs to turn their rhetoric into practice. They have things in place that indicate they know and acknowledge the value of shared vision for the organisation. However, they fall down in their commitment to the long term processes of vision

awareness and implementation. While focusing on the now and achieving present tasks is important, maintaining their link to future goals and aspirations will help to sustain efficient organisational practices in a constantly changing environment.

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A Review of Shared Vision and its Application within an Army Context

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19. ABSTRACT <p>This report provides a review of relevant literature that addresses the concept of shared vision. In doing so, it explores some of the ways in which shared vision is defined and highlights the main theories associated with the concept. Considerations are also given to those factors which enable or inhibit a truly shared vision, and the benefits it can provide for organisations.</p> <p>This report then looks at the theory of shared vision in the context of the U.S Army, and Australian Army Doctrine: exploring and identifying challenges and opportunities, to a shared vision's successful implementation. Implications are also proposed for the execution of shared vision within the Australian Army.</p> <p>Finally, the limitations of this paper and the gaps in research on shared vision are addressed. This review of literature will be used to inform the discussion of the Army Learning Organisation (ALO) research results.</p>					